

Friends, Tobacco, and Slavery

First Patuxent Meeting 1666-1817

Kim Keck
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Introduction:

Quakers have been known for their abolitionist actions prior to the War Between the States. Quakers were also known to have been conductors on the 'Underground Railroad', aiding runaway slaves in their search for freedom. However, prior to their abolitionist days, members of the Religious Society of Friends in the colonies of North America were once slave holders too. The mid-Atlantic Friends Yearly Meetings included Philadelphia and Maryland Yearly Meetings. Both these yearly meetings', prior to the War for Independence, had members that were slave holders. There were even some Quakers who were slave traders during the Society's early years of the late seventeenth century in the American colonies. How did this change come about? A change from some Members of the Religious Society of Friends being slave holders to Friends becoming known for their abolitionists' actions? The War of Independence and statehood brought changes to Friends lives in both yearly meeting regions. Maryland became a slave state, while Pennsylvania legislature banned slavery, having had a strong push by members of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends to do so. Southern Maryland, which includes Calvert, Charles and St. Mary's counties, had a large Quaker population prior to the War of Independence, but in less than thirty years after this war, Meetings for Worship were rarely holding meetings. What happened to the 'first' Patuxent Friends Meeting of Southern Maryland? Did slavery and Maryland being declared a 'slave state' have anything to do with the demise of Friends' meetings in Southern Maryland?

Patuxent Friends Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends was first organized

in 1659. Its first Monthly Meeting was held in 1666. This first Patuxent Friends Meeting (there have been three to date), held Meetings for Worship at the place called 'Clifts', in Calvert County, Maryland. The Clifts Meeting discontinued at its meeting site in 1817. Several preparative meetings north and west of the Patuxent River area were 'laid down' or discontinued even earlier than Clifts Meeting. West River Meeting was laid down as a Monthly Meeting in 1784 and Herring Creek Meeting by the late 1780s was no longer active. These southern counties were where Friends first held Meetings for Worship in the Maryland province. Here also was where the third oldest of Yearly Meetings had been held. And George Fox, the founder of the Society of Friends, had visited this area in his travels and ministry. What became of these meetings in this region of Southern Maryland and why was there no longer support for Friends' worship here in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries?

The answer lies in this region's main source of income during Maryland's' colony and early statehood time. The very livelihood upon which these Southern Maryland communities had been built – tobacco - aided in the demise of Friends Meetings for Worship in Southern Maryland. This demise began during the American Revolution and continued while Maryland formed itself into a slave-owning state. Tobacco, and the many working hands that were needed to produce it, thus slavery, ended the first Friends' meetings here in Southern Maryland. The use, at first, of indentured servants off the boats from England and Europe quickly led to the more economical use of slaves on the tobacco plantations. While indentured servants served their time for a limited number of years; slaves bought at auctions were cheap labor for life. Friends' Meetings

in the Southern Maryland (Western Shore) region slowly dwindled after Maryland Yearly Meeting approved a testimony against slavery in 1777. After the War of Independence and during Maryland's early formative years as a state with slavery, the Southern Maryland / Western Shore Friends Meetings were 'laid down'.

Friends' History:

The Religious Society of Friends was founded on the principle that there is that of God in each person. The founder, George Fox, was a 'wandering seeker' in Reformation England. He was not Catholic, nor of Church of England, nor Puritan, but very knowledgeable and well-read in the Bible. Starting in the 1650s, he spread the message about the Universal Inner Light and Truth of God, the seed of which is believed to be in each person as they live upon the earth. Friends shared the belief that each person could know God and did not need an intermediary. Early Friends upheld the virtues of honesty, truth, simplicity, and the education of both sexes in reading and writing skills, especially of the Bible. All persons could share in the traveling ministry of Friends. They could write and read epistles, journals, and letters.

Initially Friends, as they referred to themselves, called themselves the Children of Light. The nickname that stuck with the group for over three hundred years however, is "Quakers". The name Quaker came about because the seekers would often quake when in the presence of the Inner Light, or when moved to share a message or truth from God. The Religious Society of Friends was an offshoot of the Protestant Reformation and had Puritan roots. Conflicts with Puritans and other religious groups over theology started almost as soon as the movement did, in 1652.

Friends had testimonies that they adhered to, causing them to be considered peculiar and often they were persecuted. The main testimonies that often brought trouble for Friends were: to not pay tithes or church fees, to not bear arms against one's fellow man,(their peace testimony, which did not arise until the 1660s), the testimony against swearing judicial oaths, and last the testimony against hat honour. Friends were persecuted for refusing to take off their hats before magistrates. This was considered a sign of disrespect by the magistrates and courts. But Friends considered themselves and others equal in the eyes of God and therefore would not submit to such demands. Friends' refusal to 'swear an oath upon the Bible', saying that their word before God was 'Truth' and that they would not speak oaths lead to trouble for them. These refusals often brought Friends fines or prison time in England and many of the colonies. ¹

Maryland Friends:

The first mention of Quakers in Southern Maryland was only a couple of years after the movement started. In 1655-6 Elizabeth Harris, a "traveling Friend", convinced several Puritan leaders in Calvert County, Maryland, concerning the Inner Light and Truth of Friends' beliefs. During this time, some Quakers left Virginia and moved to Maryland to escape religious persecution.² In Maryland, even with its Religious Toleration Act of 1649, the Quakers were noted by the Provincial Council as being

¹ Jones, Rufus; The Later Periods of Quakerism Volume 1 & 2, Greenwood Press, Westport, CT., 1921, reprint 1970, vol.1 pp. 146-149.

² Hutchins, Ailene; Hunting Creek Hundred, privately published, A.W. Hutchins, Prince Fredrick, Md., 1992 p. 308. Rabenold, Peter, A Summary History of Quakers in Southern Maryland, 1994.

insolent for refusing to remove their hats or to swear oaths on the Bible.³ They were persecuted for their beliefs, but they were also tolerated in this colony more than in Virginia or some of New England colonies. Fines for their insolent behavior were often in the form of tobacco, which was the basic currency in Maryland during the colony's early period. In 1700, several Quakers met with the governors of Maryland and Virginia to work on and then reached an agreement so that Quakers would not be persecuted for their beliefs and actions in following their testimonies.⁴

Friends' meeting organization:

Friends organized their administrative affairs in an unconventional manner as well. It was organized around different types of 'Meetings'. Regular Meetings for Worship, also known as 'Indulged', 'Particular', or 'Weekly' Meetings, were held under the care of a Monthly Meeting. Monthly Meetings were regular business meetings held once a month to attend to the business of one or more Preparative or Indulged meetings that composed the Monthly Meeting group. The Monthly Meeting proceedings were recorded, and records of members, births, deaths and marriages were kept. 'Preparative' meetings were regularly organized single congregation business meetings. There were also Quarterly and Yearly Women's and Men's Meetings. The original Meeting for Sufferings was a large group of Friends appointed to look into and get the facts about persecutions of Friends in the early days. The Meeting for Sufferings looked after those who were suffering for following their Friends beliefs and testimonies

³ Hutchins, Ailene; p. 308.

⁴ Hutchins, Ailene; p. 308. Rabenold, Peter

within the community and in the world at large. It also became the group responsible for the Yearly Meeting business between yearly meeting sessions.

Record keeping was encouraged and communication among Friends was maintained through letters, epistles and minutes that were shared, copied and passed on to Friends and meetings on both side of the Atlantic Ocean. Friends were encouraged to educate people, so that women and men alike could read and write. Traveling Friends kept journals as they visited Friends and Friends' meetings on their journeys. Along the way, they could expect hospitality from the extended family of Friends. Friends tended to travel and migrate, both of which spread the Society and Friends' words and testimonies around Britain's colonies.

Southern Maryland Meetings:

A Monthly Meeting would carry the name of the location where meeting was held, thus Clifts, Patuxent, Indian Springs, Pickawaxen, Herring Creek, and West River were names of Weekly meetings where Monthly and Quarterly meetings were also held. Monthly Meeting business included overseeing the administration of estates of deceased members, with special care being given to widows and orphaned children.

Weekly Meetings for Worship were often held in homes, barns, or the outdoors, wherever Friends could gather together in prayer. Prior to the 1700's, the Society of Friends was solely dependent on these weekly meetings in the Maryland colony. Monthly Meetings' boundaries spanned a large area. The Monthly Meeting circulated amongst the Weekly and Particular Meetings of the region. "One of the reasons that the Quakers were able to convince many to their beliefs stemmed from the fact that there

were few ministers of the Church of England in the province.”⁵ Friends did not believe in a paid minister to read the Bible; they believed God spoke through them individually to deliver messages. The gathering together of people for worship in the manner of Friends, circulating their meetings around the region, met the spiritual needs of the Southern Maryland people. There were also social gatherings after meetings in which food and talk were shared among the Friends, thus fulfilling a social function too. The Society was made up of farmers, planters, merchants, ship owners and captains, as well as commoners or laborers. Quaker merchants were known for their thrift and frugality. Planters in Maryland built up extensive personal estates in the seventeenth century through planting tobacco and farming. These holdings included houses, livestock, orchards, and slaves. Quakers in Southern Maryland held three times as many acres as non-Quakers in the 1720s.⁶

A meeting house had been built in the Clifts area in 1683 and a proper title for the land was secured by Baltimore Yearly Meeting in 1797. In 1880 a report for the Yearly Meeting of Suffering states that “the property at the Clifts site consists of three acres of poor, unimproved land whereon the meeting house once stood, scarcely a vestige of which remains. The property is of little value and the expense for the title is not worth it.”⁷ In 1724 a meeting house was built in Prince George’s county. The Herring Creek meeting met in the Chew family home from the 1680’s to 1750’s. Though

⁵ Hutchins, Ailene; p .310.

⁶ Landes, Jordan, Abstract Thesis: ‘Great Openings in Maryland: Quakers and Politics, 1656-1692, University of Maryland, College Park, MD., 1997, pp. 61-2.

⁷ Jacobsen, Phebe, Quaker Records in Maryland, Hall of Records Commission, State of Maryland, Annapolis, MD., 1966, p. 19.

there were some meeting houses built, permanent structures did not seem necessary for most of the weekly meetings or even sometimes for the quarterly or yearly meeting sessions. Sometimes meetings were held in large tents.⁸ The lack of physical structures for worship should in no way cause one to think that Maryland Quakers were not interested in material gain.

The Maryland colony initially used indentured servants for labor. “In the 1680s, Maryland Quakers, some of whom began their own lives in Maryland as indentured servants, had accumulated enough wealth to hold indentured servants of their own. As indentured servants decreased in availability, slavery grew in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.”⁹ Early Maryland Friends did not consider holding slaves as inconsistent with their principles. The Bible has stories of slaves and masters and so slavery was not interpreted as being wrong in the Biblical sense. Tobacco growing in Maryland was for many their main means of support. The planting, growing, and handling of tobacco required a great amount of hard work and many laborers. Using slaves was more economical than indentured servants. Soon a planter’s wealth could be determined by the number of slaves held, as well as the acreage farmed.¹⁰

George Fox:

The founder of the Religious Society of Friends, George Fox, traveled from 1671 through 1673 and visited the British colonies on Barbados and North American, including Southern Maryland. During this time he strengthened the ties and

⁸ Jacobsen, Phebe, pp . 17-19.

⁹ Landes, Jordan, p. 66.

¹⁰ *ibid*

organization of the Society of Friends, setting up Meetings and communication networks through which letters and epistles of members of the Society were spread to be read and considered among all Friends. While traveling in Barbados, he had attended Meetings for Worship with white, Quaker slave owners and also with both their black and white slaves. He encouraged Meetings for Worship for all, even among the black slaves, which upset the Governor.¹¹

Fox sent epistles to the American colonial meetings and to Friends there as early as 1657, and continued until his death in 1691. “Hardly a year went by that Friends, even on remote plantations, had not received a communication direct from the founder and leading figure of the Quaker movement.”¹² In his 1657 epistle, Fox cautioned “Friends beyond the sea, that have black and Indian slaves, urging them to treat their bond servants as children of God, and to treat their slaves like white bondservants and to free them after a term of service.”¹³

Fox had written to the Governor of Barbados in 1671, denying that he was encouraging the slaves to revolt. He wrote of “admonishing them: to be sober, and to fear God, and to love their masters and mistresses, and to be faithful and diligent in their masters’ service and business.”¹⁴ He also wrote in the same letter “that it is a duty incumbent upon us to pray, and to teach, instruct and admonish those in and belonging

¹¹ Fox, George, Journal of George Fox, London Yearly Meeting, London, England, reprint 1986, pp. 602-606.

¹² Tolles, Frederick, Quakers and the Atlantic Culture, Macmillan Co., New York, NY., 1960, p. 32.

¹³ Marietta, Jack, The Reformation of American Quakerism, 1748-1783, University of Pa., Philadelphia, Pa., 1984, p. 11. Tolles, Frederick, p. 32.

¹⁴ Fox, George, p. 605.

to our families, it being the command of the Lord.”¹⁵ He also spoke with Friends in Maryland and Barbados concerning their Negroes, “admonishing them to endeavor to train them up in the fear of God...and after certain years of servitude they should make them free.”¹⁶

George Fox attended several Southern Maryland meetings while visiting with Friends in the Patuxent area during his 1672-3 travels. One of these meetings included a large general gathering at West River. This is considered to be the first ‘Yearly Meeting of the Maryland / Baltimore’ area, and thus the third oldest Yearly Meeting in the Quaker world.¹⁷ Fox was at the height of his preaching and organizing while in Maryland in 1673. The two ways of getting around in Maryland in the 1670’s were by boat or walking. Fox, while on his visits in the 1670’s, was often to be found in a boat helping with the rowing or in Meetings for Worship. Meetings were held in barns, tobacco houses, Friends’ houses, and wigwams of Indians when the weather was too cold for outdoor meetings. He visited meetings along the Cliffs of Calvert County on the Chesapeake Bay, and along the Patuxent and Potomac Rivers. Fox was fascinated with the American Indians who attended meetings in Maryland. He writes in his journal of them as ‘many of the world’s people’ and he tells of visits, meetings and travels with

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Carroll, Kenneth, Quakerism on the Eastern Shore, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Md., 1970, p. 130. Kelly, J. Reaney, Quakers in the Founding of Anne Arundel County Maryland, Maryland Historic Society, Baltimore, 1963, p. 88. Kelly refers back to Journal of George Fox.

¹⁷ Jones, Rufus, The Quakers in the American Colonies, Russell & Russell Inc., New York, NY., 1962, p. 281.

Indian kings and leaders.¹⁸

Maryland bondsmen and slaves:

In Maryland, as in other colonies, the legal status between black and white bondsmen was unclear. The move from the use of bondsmen to slavery was an economic decision. People, including indentured servants, died from the rough living conditions. The numbers of available indentured servants, both black and white, proved insufficient to meet the need for workers. As slave ships sailed up the Chesapeake, the planters turned to Africa and slavery to meet and supply their labor needs. “Until the 1750’s most Friends probably had about the same attitudes on slavery as other colonists; they either owned slaves and saw nothing wrong with their behavior as long as they treated their chattel well or they thought little of slavery at all.”¹⁹ This, however, is not the truth for all Maryland Friends, for in June 1678, the Maryland Half Yearly Meeting of Women wrote a minute showing sensitivity “in the matter of a true and kindly treatment of the children of the Negro race as well as the elderly”.²⁰ They also considered it important to have their “children trained in courtesy toward and reverence for others.”²¹ Part of the Minute reads “in regard to Christian instruction, education, and treatment towards the youth of that race, as well as the circumstances of those more

¹⁸ Fox, George, pp. 617, 663.

¹⁹ Soderlund, Jean R, Quakers and Slavery: A Divided Spirit, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ., 1985, pp. 3-4.

²⁰ Yearly Meeting of Friends. Women Friends Minutes 1677-1790, MRB 88, Microfilm records, Swarthmore College Friends Record Room, Swarthmore, Pa

²¹ Ibid.

advanced in years, which it is desired may have a place amongst us.”²²

Slavery becomes a Friends issue:

The first prepared testimony by Friends against the practice of slavery was in 1688, when a Friends Meeting in Germantown, Pennsylvania, sent a minute to their Monthly Meeting, to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting and then on to other Yearly Meetings. These Friends “were revolted by the idea of good men buying and selling human beings; they bore uncompromising testimony against the evil and prepared a minute about their concern.” The Yearly Meeting’s reaction was that no action was taken, for “Friends were not of one mind on the subject.”²³

Some Friends may have justified the custom of slave ownership on the grounds that unbaptized slaves were not Christian, therefore they could be held in bondage.²⁴ This is a strange statement as Quakers did not believe in baptism at all. In 1696, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting advised Friends to “be careful not to Encourage the bringing in of any more Negroes, and that such that have Negroes be careful of them, bring them to Meetings, or have Meetings with them in their families. The meeting clearly stated that blacks should be taught the principles of Christian religion and morality.”²⁵ Quakers mostly ignored Philadelphia Yearly Meeting’s advice regarding the slave trade and continued to buy, sell, and own slaves. They were “not being of one mind” at the time as stated officially by the Yearly Meeting eight years earlier. Friends

²² Jones, Rufus, The Quakers in the American Colonies, pp. 321-2. Maryland Yearly Meeting of Friends. Women’s Friends Minutes 1677-1790.

²³ Carroll, Kenneth, Quakerism on the Eastern Shore, p. 132.

²⁴ Kelly, J. Reaney, p. 87.

²⁵ Soderlund, Jean R, p. 19.

did teach their slaves the Gospel, cared for them above the average, generally treated them in a 'paternalistic manner' and brought them to meeting when possible, even if they incurred fines for doing so.²⁶

Yearly Meeting Epistles:

The Yearly Meetings of Philadelphia, New York, Maryland and some Yearly Meetings in England, especially London, regularly sent epistles, letters of concern, minutes and queries out amongst Friends worldwide concerning slavery in the decades of the early eighteenth century. In 1714, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting wished to consult with other American Yearly Meetings on the subject of slavery. It sent a message to London Friends requesting them to ask questions concerning slavery, since it was easier for London to communicate with North Carolina and Virginia meetings than for Philadelphia to attempt to correspond directly.²⁷ Philadelphia did send epistles directly to Maryland Yearly Meeting and Long Island Yearly Meeting in 1713. The London Yearly Meeting's Epistle of 1727 advised Friends that, "It is the sense of this meeting that the Importing of Negroes from their native country by Friends is not a commendable nor allowed practice, and is therefore censured by this meeting."²⁸

John Woolman:

Meetings for Worship and for Business between 1700 and 1750 were not always

²⁶ Sykes, John, The Quakers A New Look at Their Place in Society, Lippincott Co., Philadelphia, PA., 1959, p. 67.

²⁷ Frost, J. William, The Quaker Family in Colonial America A Portrait of The Society of Friends, St. Martin's Press, New York, NY., 1973, p. 5.

²⁸ Mallonee, Barbara et al., Minute by Minute: A History of the Baltimore Monthly Meetings of Friends Homewood & Stony Run Meetings, Baltimore, MD., 1992, p. 173.

comfortable with abolitionists and their 'disorderly' conduct in bringing their concerns about slavery to the attention of different meetings. However, in the way of Friends, the way opened, and through perseverance, epistles and some 'weighty Friends' such as John Woolman, Friends' beliefs and actions concerning slavery changed. Much of these changes depended upon traveling Friends, the writings and messages that they shared in Meetings for Worship, and during social visits with Friends. These traveling, ministering Friends expected to be able to find food and lodging at Friends' homes along their roads of travels. They would then attend and often spoke during meetings for worship. "In several traveling Friends' journals it was noted with surprise and shock at the wealth, display, and even pride shown in the demeanor, dress and houses of some of the West River area Friends."²⁹

John Woolman, one such prominent Friend, resided in New Jersey. He traveled to many Friends meetings in the colonies during his life. Between 1746 and 1768 he made six visits to Maryland Friends. In his early travels through slave-holding colonies, occasionally lodging and eating with slave owning members of the Society of Friends, Woolman increasingly became uncomfortable with "lavish slaveholders living off the backs of their slaves".³⁰ He tried to make Friends see the evil spiritual, moral, social, and economical effects from the use of slave labors. He prophesized with clear insight that if "Friends prefer their outward prospects of gain to all their considerations and do not act conscientiously toward their fellow creatures I believe the burden will grow

²⁹ Carroll, Kenneth, Maryland Quakers and Slavery, Quaker History the Bulletin of Friends Historical Association, Spring, 1983, p. 31.

³⁰ Jones, Rufus, The Quakers in the American Colonies p. 322. Jones refers back to Journal of John Woolman.

heavier and heavier”.³¹ In 1754, Woolman’s *The Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes: Recommended to the Professors of Christianity of Every Denomination* was printed. The second part was printed in 1762.³² These essays avoided attacking slaveholders, but entreated Friends to work for the good of all mankind, not for their own self interest. He reminded them that blacks were equal to whites in God’s eyes and used the Golden Rule to remind Friends of humility.³³ He spoke in a calm, gentle and loving manner of the evils of slavery upon the slaveholders. After being visited by John Woolman, Friends were often moved to manumit their slaves. By setting the short term goal of getting the Society of Friends to ban the buying and selling of slaves, instead of demanding outright emancipation, John Woolman secured the necessary greater support that eventually led to there being abolitionist Friends. Over the next eighteen years, work was continued to convince Friends that slavery was wrong, with Friends having meetings with slaveholding Friends, laboring with them to see the Light as to the wrongness of slavery.

In 1758 the London Yearly Meeting Minute to all Friends, read that the “Quaker conscience was not lulled with slavery arguments. Slavery was wrong, and against this position there could be no effective attack. It was not just the slave trade that was wrong, but slavery was wrong in itself. No man had the right to hold another man in bondage except temporarily for his own good.”³⁴

³¹ Jones, Rufus, *The Quakers in the American Colonies*, p. 323. refers to Woolman’s journal.

³² Carroll, Kenneth; *Quakerism on the Eastern Shore*, p. 132. refers to Woolman’s journal.

³³Soderlund, Jean R, p. 27.

³⁴ Jones, Rufus; *The Quakers in the American Colonies* pp. 516-8. *1758 London Yearly Meeting Minute*.

Friends' Children:

Another of the many reasons for Friends to condemn slavery was the ill effects that slavery had upon the family. Quaker children residing in slaveholding families were seen as incompatible with Friends beliefs and testimonies. In teaching piety, Friends believed that the dominion of master over slave was no model for Quaker children to imitate. Households with slaves contradicted the lessons and virtues that the Society of Friends taught and expected parents to teach their children concerning humility, modesty, temperance and reserve.³⁵ Children needed to learn their place in the family with due humility. "A child accustomed to living in luxury and giving orders to slaves did not learn proper submissiveness. Friends perceived that there was something incompatible about teaching that Christianity required one to be a servant of all and then giving a child the power to rule adult Negro men and women."³⁶ The inequities of teaching the Golden Rule to children and living by it in slave holding households caused questions to be asked about these issues. Friends were also questioning the breaking up of black families by the buying and selling of members of slave families, thus disrupting and disrespecting the sanctity of marriage and families.³⁷

Two Sides to Maryland Yearly Meeting:

Maryland Yearly Meeting usually met twice a year, in the spring on the western shores of the Chesapeake in Southern Maryland and in the fall on the eastern shores of Maryland. The two shores had trouble communicating and visiting regularly because

³⁵ Marietta, Jack, p. 61.

³⁶ Frost, J. William, p. 78. Frost refers back to Woolman's journal.

³⁷ Soderlund, Jean R, p. 27.

boats went up and down the Chesapeake more often than across. There were problems with tides, winds and such factors that made the communication across the Bay difficult.³⁸ With the 1758 London Minute a division and change came over Maryland Friends as their spirits considered the issues of slavery. Eastern shore Quakers did not rely on tobacco for their income, but for western shore Quakers, tobacco was 'their sustainable crop'.³⁹

The 1759 Maryland Yearly Meeting fall session responded to the above minute by revising their queries to include, "Are Friends careful of not importing or buying Negroes? Do they treat them with humanity? Do they train them up in the principles of the Christian religion?"⁴⁰ Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's response to the 1758 Minute was that any Friend who purchased or sold a slave could not participate in the business of the Society.⁴¹

Maryland's Quakers were in opposition on the advices and queries. The western shore Quakers still wanted to be able to buy (and sell) slaves, and to own slaves and continue to prosper as before. Although the slave owning Quakers of the western shore (or Western Quarter) do not appear to have been much influenced, if at all, in this matter up until 1768, the Maryland Yearly Meeting 'body' continued its movement

³⁸Carroll, Kenneth, Maryland Quakers and Slavery, p. 36. Jacobsen, Phebe, p. 8. Kelly, J. Reaney, p. 87. Mallonee, Barbara et al., p. 59.

³⁹Carroll, Kenneth, Maryland Quakers and Slavery, p. 36.

⁴⁰ Baltimore Yearly Meeting Miscellaneous reports & minutes 1681-, MRB 81, Microfilm records, Swarthmore College Friends Record Room, Swarthmore, Pa. Carroll, Kenneth, Maryland Quakers and Slavery, p. 29. Carroll, Kenneth, Quakerism on the Eastern Shore, p.133. Kelly, J. Reaney, p. 87.

⁴¹ Marietta, Jack, p. 116.

towards an abolition position.⁴²

In 1768, Maryland Yearly Meeting decided to disown 'for terms of life' those persons who continued to buy and sell slaves. To disown meant they would write them out of the Society of Friends for 'disorderly conduct' and have little to do with them unless and until they mended their ways. However slave owners, though not permitted to be active in the meeting life were visited frequently, with the hope that they would free their slaves. In 1770, Maryland Yearly Meeting, "having taken a time of calmness and brotherly tenderness towards each other; states that it appears in the solid sense of the Meeting that in the future, Friends should be careful to avoid appointing such for 'elder', who do not appear to have a testimony in their hearts against the practice of slave keeping".⁴³

London and Maryland Yearly Meeting Minutes:

London Yearly Meeting during this whole time was sending and expecting to receive back responses to their minutes, queries, and advices from all the other yearly, quarterly and even monthly meetings. "London Yearly Meeting seems to have been fully aware of the fact that Maryland Quakers were far from united in the movement against slavery."⁴⁴

London Yearly Meeting was sending out strongly worded Minutes on their members' thoughts on slavery to Maryland's yearly, quarterly and monthly meetings.

⁴² Carroll, Kenneth, Maryland Quakers and Slavery, p. 35.

⁴³ Baltimore Yearly Meeting Miscellaneous reports & minutes 1681-. Carroll, Kenneth, Quakerism on the Eastern Shore, p. 135. Carroll, Kenneth, Maryland Quakers and Slavery, p. 33. Drake, Thomas; Quakers and Slavery in America, Peter Smith, Gloucester, MA., 1965 pp. 81-2.

⁴⁴ Carroll, Kenneth, Maryland Quakers and Slavery, p. 36.

They sent and received epistles from 1770 through 1779 concerning Friends' testimony on slavery. During the American Revolution, London and the colonial yearly meetings corresponded upon the slavery concerns. Since one of Friends' testimonies was 'to not bear arms', their 'peace testimony' and their slave issues set them apart. They were alienated from the communities they lived in because their testimonies created a cultural division. Though they may not have been royalist sympathizers, they were often ostracized for their refusal to take up arms.

Persuasion or Disownment:

The 1772 fall Maryland Yearly Meeting, held on the Eastern Shore, requested that committees be set up to meet and labor with those members who still possessed slaves. The 1773 spring Yearly meeting of Maryland and London Yearly Meeting both noted that Maryland's Western Quarter reported that the advices had been considered before their Quarterly Meeting, 'but no progress had been made therein'.⁴⁵ The Western Quarterly Meeting of Maryland members appeared to not comply with the slave testimonies of Friends from the other Yearly and Quarterly meetings in the colonies and Britain.

The American Revolutionary War period occurred during the Enlightenment, a time of defining what freedom and the rights of the human race mean to mankind, as reflected in the Declaration of Independence. All these helped the Society of Friends to see the errors of slaveholding. But the society had to meet, worship and share their concerns amongst themselves, often in gentle but firm ways. No one was visited more

⁴⁵ Carroll, Kenneth, Maryland Quakers and Slavery, p. 37. Baltimore Yearly Meeting Miscellaneous reports & minutes 1681-

often during the 1760 and 1770s than Quaker slaveholders. Elders would meet with slaveholders and worship with them, discuss the slave issues and pray that God would let the slave-owners see the light and see the error in their slaveholding ways. These slaveholders were made to feel guilty and out of unity with the Society of Friends.⁴⁶

In late 1776 and early 1777, one such Friend, Isaac Jackson, was called to make religious visits with a special concern to slave holders in the western quarter, along the western shore of Maryland. His visits caused the emancipation of some slaves of Western Shore Quakers at both West River and Indian Springs Monthly Meetings.⁴⁷ This start of emancipation amongst Western Shore Friends allowed the fall Maryland Yearly Meeting in 1777 to advise and encourage quarterly and monthly meetings to meet and labor with slaveholding members. If they continued in their slave holding ways, then the quarterly and monthly meetings were to no longer accept “subscription of such” from these people.⁴⁸ This meant meetings were not to accept money or services from slave holding members. The spring Maryland Yearly Meeting at West River was led to “disown, without unnecessary delay, as ‘disorderly walkers’, those Friends who continued to reject the advices of the yearly meeting in not freeing their slaves. Friends were also advised not to hire slaves, nor to serve as overseers.”⁴⁹ A considerable number of Maryland Quakers were apparently wedded to the slavery system which

⁴⁶ Marietta, Jack, p. 118.

⁴⁷ Carroll, Kenneth, Maryland Quakers and Slavery, p. 38.

⁴⁸ Baltimore Yearly Meeting Miscellaneous reports & minutes 1681-. Carroll, Kenneth, Maryland Quakers and Slavery, p. 38.

⁴⁹ Baltimore Yearly Meeting Miscellaneous reports & minutes 1681-. Carroll, Kenneth, Maryland Quakers and Slavery, p. 40. Drake, Thomas, p. 82.

plantation life required. They found it impossible to put aside their love of ease and security, and consequently they were disowned for refusing to free their slaves.⁵⁰ In 1778, it was noted that West River Monthly Meeting was not reporting to the quarterly or yearly meetings their concerns for Friends suffering for their testimonies against war and against slavery, or members' sufferings for emancipating their slaves.⁵¹

Disownment in Southern Maryland:

The Western Quarterly & Monthly meetings of the western shores of Southern Maryland recorded those who were disowned in their records. Herring Creek disowned three members for slave holding, Gunpowder eight, West River ten and they also disowned six other slave holding members for 'other reasons'. Indian Springs, Sandy Springs and Clifts meetings all disowned members for being slave holders during the following years 1778 to 1780.⁵² These were Friends of both genders, since there were also female heads of households holding slaves. Many of the wealthy western shore Quakers appear to have been lukewarm in their dedication to certain Friends' testimonies in general. Non-Quakerly practices included their making payments of tithes to the established Anglican Church and putting aside the Peace Testimony during the time of the American Revolution.⁵³

Friends continued to labor to persuade Friends to manumit their slaves rather than suffer disownment. They would then assist them in the arrangements for the

⁵⁰ Carroll, Kenneth, Maryland Quakers and Slavery, p. 40.

⁵¹ Baltimore Yearly Meeting Miscellaneous reports & minutes 1681-

⁵² Carroll, Kenneth, Maryland Quakers and Slavery, p. 40.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

manumission and care for those freed slaves.⁵⁴ London Yearly Meeting continued to send epistles to Friends meetings in the new states, encouraging meetings to persuade state governments to outlaw slavery. They also encouraged Friends to care for their freed slaves, seeing that they learned to be self supporting and educated enough to fend for themselves in the new states.⁵⁵

By 1780, most Maryland Quaker slaveholders had been disowned by their various meetings. Maryland's Yearly Meeting epistle that year states "the testimony against slavery has advanced, so that few amongst us continue to hold slaves".⁵⁶ Time was needed for a complete disappearance of slavery from the Society due to marriages, inheritances and the estates of minors. Friends who married slave owners, or who inherited slaves or were underage were given an extended time frame to free their slaves instead of disownment.

Those Friends who were disowned by their meeting between 1778 and 1780 could choose to reform and accept the Friends' slavery testimony, thus making it possible to be reinstated. (within the Friends' membership.) Those who did not wish to release their slaves could drop their Quaker faith and become members of the Episcopalian or Church of England/Anglican faiths in their areas. In 1782 came the advent of the Methodist religion in Calvert County; it began with the arrival of the Methodist minister Francis Ashbury.⁵⁷ Disowned slave holding Friends turned to the

⁵⁴ Marietta, Jack, p. 121.

⁵⁵ Baltimore Yearly Meeting Miscellaneous reports & minutes 1681-. Carroll, Kenneth, Maryland Quakers and Slavery, p. 38.

⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 41.

⁵⁷ Hutchins, Ailene, pp. 313-4. Kelly, J. Reaney, p. 88.

Methodist, Anglican, and Episcopalian religions to meet their spiritual needs.

Meetings for Suffering:

The Meeting for Suffering was established in Maryland in 1778. It kept records of Friends' fines, imprisonment, and the hardships suffered for witnessing to Friends' testimonies, including its abolitionist testimony. They were responsible for the welfare of the families of those who had suffered as slaves while under Friends' care. They encouraged and aided 'disowned Friends' to free their slaves, and return to their 'right standing' within their monthly meeting and the Friends Society. The Meetings for Suffering also oversaw and encouraged schools (and Friends) in the teaching of black children (of freed slaves) to read and write. This was especially true in the Baltimore region with its strong, persuasive, abolitionist Friends group.⁵⁸

Maryland Friends freed themselves from direct responsibility for slave holding in the state, but not without cost to Friends or to the Society in Maryland. In addition to the financial losses incurred with the philanthropic manumission of their slaves, most Southern Maryland Friends had to move from their homes. Some moved to Baltimore, a rapidly growing, 'Friendly' city, others moved out to farms in central and western Pennsylvania, western New York and the new territory of Ohio. Quaker tobacco planters without slaves could not survive economically or socially in a region where slavery prevailed.⁵⁹

Northwest Territories:

⁵⁸ Baltimore Yearly Meeting Miscellaneous reports & minutes 1681-. Carroll, Kenneth, Maryland Quakers and Slavery, p. 38. Jacobsen, Phebe, p. 19.

⁵⁹ Drake, Thomas, p. 82.

1787 saw the opening of the 'Northwest Territories' of Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin and Minnesota. These territories were "free from slavery, with it being forever excluded."⁶⁰ In the early 1800's, several of the last Quaker family groups left Calvert County for Ohio and New York. They sought a place where slavery was not endorsed and they could farm, live, raise families and follow the Friends' testimonies and continue and expand the Religious Society of Friends' network of meetings. They were part of the first great westward Quaker migration. For those Southern Friends, freeing their slaves resulted initially in general hardships. Not only were Quakers treated with hostility by their slave owning neighbors, but some of their freed slaves were seized and sold into slavery again. Friends who had freed their slaves reduced themselves and their families to virtual poverty. Thus the opening of the Northwest Territory was an answer to the prayers of many Maryland Quakers.⁶¹

Baltimore Yearly Meeting Changes:

Baltimore grew as a port city during the 1780's and 90's, becoming an important commercial, industrial and transportation center. Many Baltimore Friends were prominent among the merchants, artisans, shippers, and industrialists. They felt that "good trade practices did not include slavery."⁶² In 1790, Maryland Yearly Meeting went through some major changes. It became Baltimore Yearly Meeting. The Eastern Shores' Quarterly meetings joined their monthly and quarterly meetings with

⁶⁰ Bacon, Margaret, The Quiet Rebels The Story of the Quakers in America, New Society Publishing, Philadelphia, PA., 1985, p. 77.

⁶¹ Bacon, Margaret, p. 77. Hutchins, Ailene, p. 314.

⁶² Mallonee, Barbara et al., pp. 59 & 183.

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. One reason stated for this change was for the ease in meetings and inter-meeting visits.⁶³ The quarterly and monthly meetings had found problems with travel on the Chesapeake Bay, especially from east to west across the Bay.⁶⁴

Friends Petition for Slave Legislature:

Maryland Friends from both Baltimore Yearly Meeting and Philadelphia Yearly Meetings began writing minutes and petitioning the State of Maryland and United States governments concerning slavery. Baltimore Yearly and Monthly Meetings in their unrelenting condemnation of slavery petitioned the Maryland Assembly for the right of the people to manumit their slaves by wills in 1784. The Congress of the Confederation had no inclination to prohibit the importation of slaves, although Friends did petition for it throughout the 1780's. The Confederation and Congress did agree to keep slavery out of the 'Northwest Territory' by its 1787 ordinance.⁶⁵ The second session of the U.S. Congress held in January 1790 had a heated debate on the slavery issue, because a delegation of Friends had appeared with a 'Memorial' calling for the abolition of slavery.

⁶⁶ In the General Assembly of Maryland in 1791, 1802, and 1804, and in Congress, Baltimore Yearly Meeting presented an address on behalf of black people in the state, and for those blacks who had been 'in service' for thirty-one years. They also pushed for laws with penalties for carrying a free black man across state lines. Partly through

⁶³ Ibid. p. 59.

⁶⁴ Mallonee, Barbara et al., p. 59. Jacobsen, Phebe, p. 8.

⁶⁵ Drake, Thomas, p, 95.

⁶⁶ Mallonee, Barbara et al., p.183. Bowden, James, The History of the Society of Friends in America, Volume 1&2, Arno Press, New York, NY., 1972, p. 368.

the works of Friends an act of Congress prohibiting the African slave trade was passed in 1807.⁶⁷ The abolition of the foreign slave trade took place as soon as the Constitution gave the Federal government power to that effect.⁶⁸

Baltimore Yearly Meeting passed a minute in 1787 to set up schools for the education of black children of manumitted slaves. In 1794 this schooling was extended to include any children of black parents. In 1796 some Friends committees visited black families in the state to check on their “education and religious improvements”.⁶⁹ In 1807 the Meeting for Suffering sent an address to President Jefferson “concerning the wrongs of slavery and the wrongs being done to the African Race and their lack of Freedom and Liberty in several states in the United States”.⁷⁰

Writers’ thoughts on Friends Slave Testimony:

J. William Frost has written that “Friends’ protests against slavery were the primary extensions of their religious testimonies. The concern originally of a few individuals became a general policy by obtaining the consent of the entire body of the Society of Friends. The Friends’ opposition to slavery had been arrived at only through a compassionate concern for the welfare of both the Negroes and the previous slave holding Friends”.⁷¹ John Sykes, along those same lines, wrote that “it took Friends a century to reach the standpoint in which Quakers, with their keen sense of the rights of

⁶⁷ Bowden, James, p. 369.

⁶⁸ Baltimore Yearly Meeting Miscellaneous reports & minutes 1681-. Bowden, James, pp. 367-9.

⁶⁹ Baltimore Yearly Meeting Miscellaneous reports & minutes 1681-.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Frost, J. William, p. 218.

the Negroes to enjoy liberty, could not tamely and quietly behold all the wrongs, injustices and cruelty around them without making an effort to put an end to it".⁷²

Margaret Bacon in her book, *The Quiet Rebels*, writes of "Friends' growing realization that slavery was in opposition to their faith and testimonies. Members were reminded to free themselves from this institution: first by not being involved in the slave trade, later by freeing themselves of holding slaves at all".⁷³ Ailene Hutchins and Phebe Jacobsen in their books say the same thing, and add that "few other religious groups in colonial America have been more concerned with the social evils of society in which they lived. No other group has expended more energy, money, or influence on the education of youths, on the abolition of slavery, and on the care of manumitted Negroes".⁷⁴

Jack Marietta has stated that "other churches had shown an interest initially in the abolition of slavery, but Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians had retreated into silence on the issue by 1795. They learned that to champion abolition they would have to forgo the dearest prospect of thousands of converted and harvested souls, especially in the South."⁷⁵ The Society of Friends, in its peculiar and unique way, was resolute in insisting on abolition from its members. These stern disciplines and testimonies cost the Society hundreds of members and afforded them little prospect of attracting many converts. Friends at least could preserve their integrity.⁷⁶

⁷² Sykes, John, p. 65.

⁷³ Bacon, Margaret, p. 46.

⁷⁴ Hutchins, Ailene, p. 319. Jacobsen, Phebe, p. 21.

⁷⁵ Marietta, Jack, pp. 123, 127.

⁷⁶ Marietta, Jack, p. 127.

Conclusion:

J. Reaney Kelly noted that in 1812 the Friend's meeting house at Herring Creek was being used for tobacco storage, so Friends had to use a Methodist church for their Meeting for Worship.⁷⁷ Friends' testimony against slavery meant that the tobacco plantations of Southern Maryland were unable to combine Friends' beliefs with the use of slave driven labor. Baltimore Friends had been unable to get the Maryland Assembly to outlaw slavery in the State of Maryland, whereas the Philadelphia Friends had been able to do so in Pennsylvania. Meetings and membership in the Society of Friends in Southern Maryland had been quite strong during the areas colonial days. This had completely changed with the Society's new testimony against slavery in the 1770s and during the American Revolution. The tobacco fields, plantations and the use of slave labor made it impossible for Friends to survive economically and socially in Southern Maryland and remain true to the Friends' testimonies. Thus the first Patuxent Meeting became inactive in the early 1800s, with members moving from the area to non slavery areas or changing their livelihoods and moving to cities like Baltimore. The disowned members, who remained in the area, tended to join other religions that allowed them to remain slave owning tobacco growers in Southern Maryland. Baltimore Friends continued to hold their abolitionist stance through to the Civil War. They tried to educate blacks, both freemen, slaves and children, who came under their care. Some Baltimore Friends even became conductors for the Underground Railroad. Once the Society of Friends embraced their abolitionist testimony, all members were in concurrence or they

⁷⁷ Kelly, J. Reaney, p. 88.

no longer were considered members of the Society. The Society sought unity of its members concerning their testimonies, and once there was an anti-slavery testimony it was understood that members would and did unite with this concern. It took Friends over one hundred years to reach their anti-slavery testimony, but once they had, they did so as a group, albeit disowning those who did not adhere to Friends' principles and testimonies. Friends had finally seen the Light concerning the evils of slavery and they took action. And so, the first Patuxent Friends Meetings for Worship came to an end due to the regions use of slave labor to grow tobacco.

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